

Message Text

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ACTION SCSE-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-14 ISO-00 SCA-01 L-03 H-02 FBIE-00
DHA-02 NSC-05 SNM-02 DEAE-00 PRS-01 /031 W
-----114714 281850Z /43
R 281822Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3157

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 10743

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CARR, MX
SUBJECT: PRISONER SERVICES: TRANSMITTAL OF PRISONER
LETTER ON DISTURBANCES AT ORIENTE PRISON

REF: A. STATE 146602, B. MEXICO 10306, C. MEXICO 10305

1. EMBASSY DOES NOT UNDERSTAND DEPARTMENT'S RELUCTANCE TO TRANSMIT LETTER FROM OUGHTON TO CONGRESSMAN STARK AND MRS. MARY COULTER. BECAUSE OF UNRELIABILITY OF MAILS IN MEXICO, EMBASSY HAS FOR MANY MONTHS BEEN SENDING AND RECEIVING LETTER MAIL FOR PRISONERS THROUGH ITS POST OFFICE BOX AT LAREDO. MAIL DELIVERY IS ONE OF THE SERVICES MOST APPRECIATED BY PRISONERS, AND ONE MOST IMPORTANT TO THEIR MORALE. WE HAVE, OF COURSE, BEEN SCRUPULOUS IN TRYING TO TRANSMIT MAIL AS RECEIVED, WITHOUT ATTEMPTING TO CENSOR OR BLOCK ANY MAIL, REGARDLESS OF OUR OPINION OF CONTENTS (WE RARELY SEE ACTUAL TEXT). WE BELIEVE IT IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR PRISONERS TO BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE PRESIDENT, OR WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, OR WITH INDIVIDUALS, SUCH AS MRS. COULTER, WHO HAVE TAKEN AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN PRISONER WELFARE. DEPARTMENT SHOULD NOTE, ALSO, THAT AT THE TIME OUGHTON GAVE NOTE TO CONOFF, HE DID NOT HAVE
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ACCESS TO THE MAILS, AND IT WAS NOT CLEAR TO HIM OR TO EMBASSY HOW LONG THE EMERGENCY CONDITIONS AT ORIENTE WOULD CONTINUE.

2. EMBASSY DID NOT, OF COURSE, RECOMMEND THAT OUGHTON'S LETTER BE TRANSMITTED TO THE PRESS, AS WE CONSIDERED IT INAPPROPRIATE FOR EMBASSY TO SERVE AS CHANNEL OF

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN OUR PRISONERS AND THE PRESS. WE ASSUMED DEPARTMENT WOULD TAKE SIMILAR POSITION.

3. REF C PROVIDES EMBASSY'S FULL REPORT ON DISTURBANCES AT ORIENTE, WHICH DEPARTMENT MAY DRAW UPON IN PROVIDING FURTHER INFORMATION TO CONGRESSMAN STARK AND MRS. COULTER. TO SUPPLEMENT THAT REPORT, FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE DIRECTED TO PORTIONS OF OUGHTON'S LETTER AS QUOTED IN PARA 3 OF REF B:

A. OUGHTON DESCRIBES DIRECTOR TRUJILLO AS FORMER ASSISTANT TO DIRECTOR OF LECUMBERRI AND FORMERLY THE "REPRESSIVE" SUB-DIRECTOR AT NORTE RECLUSORIO. TRUJILLO APPARENTLY DID SERVE ON STAFF AT LECUMBERRI. HOWEVER, EMBASSY RECEIVED NO SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS FROM AMERICAN PRISONERS AGAINST HIM DURING HIS PERIOD AT NORTE, NOR HAD CONOFFS WHO REGULARLY VISIT NORTE CONSIDERED PRISON ADMINISTRATION THERE "REPRESSIVE."

B. OUGHTON MENTIONS "REPRESSIVE ORDERS AND STATEMENTS" ISSUED BY TRUJILLO UPON ASSUMING CHARGE AT ORIENTE, WITHOUT FURTHER SPECIFICATION. THUS FAR, SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST TRUJILLO CENTER ON ORDERS FOR 6 AM ROLL CALL AND SHORT HAIRCUTS. TRUJILLO ALSO CUT OFF VISITS AND TELEPHONE CALLS TEMPORARILY, BUT HAS SINCE INDICATED THAT HE PROPOSES TO CONTINUE POLICY OF FORMER UNCLASSIFIED

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DIRECTOR IN THIS REGARD. IN RETROSPECT, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER SUSPENSION OF VISITS AND TELEPHONE CALLS WAS PERHAPS TEMPORARY SECURITY OR DISCIPLINARY MEASURE RELATED TO THE DISTURBANCES, WHICH BEGAN THE DAY AFTER HE TOOK CHARGE AT ORIENTE.

C. OUGHTON CLAIMS UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FOR HUNGER STRIKE. SEVERAL AMERICAN PRISONERS TOLD CONOFF THEY WERE PARTICIPATING ONLY BECAUSE THEY FEARED RETALIATION IF THEY REFUSED.

D. EMBASSY IS NOT IN A POSITION TO COMMENT UPON OUGHTON'S DETAILED BUT CONFUSED NARRATIVE OF EVENTS JUNE 17 TO JUNE 20. WE DO NOT HAVE SIMILARLY DETAILED ACCOUNTS FROM OTHER SOURCES.

AMONG SALIENT FACTS WHICH APPEAR CONFIRMED: (1) RIOT POLICE APPARENTLY DID ENTER DORMITORY AREA BOTH SATURDAY NIGHT (TO FORCE PRISONERS TO THEIR CELLS) AND SUNDAY (PURPOSE UNSPECIFIED, BUT POSSIBLY TO QUIET PRISONERS, WHO WERE NOISY IF NOT VIOLENT). ON LATTER OCCASION, TEAR GAS CANISTERS AND PERHAPS GUNS WERE FIRED. NO AMERICAN

PRISONERS WERE INJURED, AND WE HAVE NOT HEARD OF ANY
INJURIES AMONG MEXICAN PRISONERS. ONE AMERICAN PRISONER
WAS ROUGHLY HANDLED IN BEING TAKEN OUT OF ORIENTE. (2)
ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THERE WERE DISTURBANCES
OUTSIDE ORIENTE ON JUNE 19 WHEN FAMILIES WHO HAD GATHERED
TO VISIT PRISONERS WERE NOT ALLOWED INSIDE.

E. CONOFFS VISITING ORIENTE (AND OTHER PRISONS)
ARE ALERT TO ANY COMPLAINT FROM PRISONERS ALLEGING
EXTORTION OR REPRESSION BY PRISON STAFF OR FELLOW
PRISONERS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR SITUATION AT

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ACTION SCSE-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-14 ISO-00 SCA-01 L-03 H-02 FBIE-00
DHA-02 NSC-05 SNM-02 DEAE-00 PRS-01 /031 W
-----114760 281849Z /43

R 281822Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3158

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ORIENTE AND TO TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION TO PROTECT
AMERICANS THERE. THOMPSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 28-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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Format: TEL
From: MEXICO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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